

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 152 365

JC 780 185

AUTHOR Belock, Shirley
TITLE Nursing Departmental Examinations--A Proposed Alternative to the Current CLEP Policy at Castleton State College.
PUB DATE 8 Feb 78
NOTE 55p.; Ed.D. Practicum, Nova University

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.83 HC-\$3.50 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Advanced Placement; College Credits; Educational Policy; *Equivalency Tests; *Nursing; *Post Secondary Education; Professional Education; *School Surveys; Student Attitudes; Teacher Attitudes

IDENTIFIERS Castleton State College VT

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the policy that allows students to challenge the first year of the associate degree nursing program at Castleton State College meets the needs of challenging students and does not handicap either students or faculty in meeting learning requirements. Successful challenging students (n=9), students eligible to challenge who did not do so (n=2), nursing faculty (n=6), and directors of two other associate degree nursing programs responded to open-ended items on a pretested questionnaire. All four respondent groups considered a challenging policy valid; they felt it should be continued to both prevent course content repetition and to save students time and money. There was a mixed response on what testing method better samples student knowledge. Challenging students felt national examinations were satisfactory, while faculty felt such examinations were inadequate and supported, instead, using teacher prepared exams. Some faculty felt too many credit hours were awarded to challenging students. Approximately one-half of challenging and both non-challenging students felt handicapped. Faculty concurred and indicated that students were particularly weak in some areas. Policy changes are recommended. A bibliography and a copy of the survey instrument are included. (TR)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

ED152365

NURSING DEPARTMENTAL EXAMINATIONS - A PROPOSED
ALTERNATIVE TO THE CURRENT CLEP POLICY
AT CASTLETON STATE COLLEGE

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Shirley Belock

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND
USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRO-
DUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM
THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGIN-
ATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS
STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT
OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

by

Shirley Belock, M.A.

Castleton State College
Castleton, Vermont

A PRACTICUM PRESENTED TO NOVA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

NOVA UNIVERSITY

FEBRUARY 8, 1978

JC 780 185

NURSING DEPARTMENTAL EXAMINATIONS - A PROPOSED
ALTERNATIVE TO THE CURRENT CLEP POLICY
AT CASTLETON STATE COLLEGE

by

Shirley Belock

EDUCATIONAL POLICY SYSTEMS

BRISTOL CLUSTER

ABSTRACT

This document reports on a study that examined the existing policy of allowing students to challenge the first year of the associate degree nursing program. The challenging examinations used were the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) examination for fundamentals of nursing. The objective of the study was to determine whether the policy was not only meeting the needs of challenging students, but also not handicapping either the student or the faculty in meeting student nurse learning needs. A questionnaire was prepared and distributed to students who challenged; students who, though eligible, chose not to challenge; faculty of the Castleton State College nursing department; and, directors of the other two associate degree nursing programs in Vermont. The results from the questionnaires identified that the policy of allowing students to challenge the nursing program was an acceptable practice. However, the responses to other questions were mixed. These included the amount of credit to be awarded, the type of examination that should be used to assess student knowledge, and whether students were handicapped in their basic knowledge. From the results of the questionnaires an alternate

policy was proposed. The steps for implementation of the proposal were identified and were to be used once the proposed policy was approved by the nursing faculty, college faculty, and administration.



NATIONAL

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	iii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE	4
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	7
SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	12
3. PROCEDURE	14
POPULATION TO BE STUDIED	14
DETERMINATION OF METHOD	15
ASSUMPTIONS	17
4. RESULTS	19
5. DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS .	38
PROPOSAL	42
REFERENCES CITED	45
APPENDIX	47



NATIONAL

LIST OF TABLES

Tables	Page
1. Do you feel that challenging Examinations should be used for awarding credits in nursing? Why do you feel this way?	21
2. Do you feel a national examination such as the College Level Examination Program (CLEP), adequately tests the student's knowledge or would a teacher made test be a better indicator?	25
3. Six credits are awarded for successfully challenging the fundamentals of nursing examination. Is this too many, too few, or satisfactory?	29
4. Many students feel a letter grade should be given for successfully passing the challenging examination. What do you feel should be the policy?	32
5. There has been some indication that challenging students are handicapped in their knowledge base when entering the second year of the program. What do you feel about this?	35

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

In 1974 the department of nursing at Castleton State College was authorized to allow the practical nurse, corpsman, and former student from a registered nurse program to challenge the first year of the associate degree nursing program. The students challenged the first year through successfully passing a fundamentals of nursing test offered by the College Level Examination Program (CLEP). The policy was implemented because many former students had indicated extreme frustration of having to repeat course content they believed they knew. They felt that if they must enter at the beginning of the nursing program it would not only be a waste of their time, but also their money.

Since implementation of the policy, forty students have taken and successfully passed the examination. Eighteen students have now completed the second year of the associate degree nursing program and all eighteen have passed the state board examination for registered nurse licensure. There are, at present, seven students in the second year of the program who have successfully challenged, with an additional ten scheduled to enter in the fall semester of 1978. Eight more have passed the challenging examination and have been placed on a waiting list for a vacancy to occur in the class so they may enter and continue their education.

By successfully passing the CLEP examination the student can be awarded up to eight college credits. The nursing faculty then administers a test in fundamental nursing skills. The student, by passing the skills test, earns an additional four credits. The total twelve credits earned equals the first two semesters of the nursing course of study. No grades have been given for the scores earned on the tests. Identification of credits on the student transcript has been indicated as 'credit by examination' and considered as transfer credit.

Many questions have arisen regarding the existing policy. These questions must be answered to determine not only the validity of the policy, but also whether it should be continued as stated at the present time.

Examples of questions raised were: 1) Does the policy actually identify student knowledge in the desired areas? 2) Would teacher prepared tests be more appropriate in identifying student knowledge? 3) Does the policy cover too much course work, or too little? 4) Is student knowledge equivalent to the non-challenging student? 5) What problems do nursing faculty have when students enter an established class half-way through the program? 6) Are faculty unaware of problems challenging students may have? Can these problems be resolved or are they of the magnitude that jeopardize student learning?

In attempting to answer these problems a questionnaire was prepared and distributed to the following groups: The challenging student; the student who was eligible but chose not to challenge; the faculty within the department of nursing at Castleton State College; and, the directors of the other

two associate degree nursing programs in Vermont.

From the responses to the questionnaire a proposal was prepared for submission to the nursing faculty. Recommendations were included for the implementation of the proposal if adopted by the faculty and college administration.



Chapter 2

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The policy of challenging specific courses and the awarding of college credit at Castleton State College has been in effect since 1968. The policy has been a nebulous one. The final decision as to whether the student received credit for successfully passing a challenging examination has been left up to each department chairman and the philosophy of that particular department. The 1977-78 college bulletin states that if the student receives a passing score in the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) "credits may be given . . . (17)."

The policy, therefore, lead to confusion for not only the student who desired to challenge, but also among the faculty, and between departments. For example: Once the student successfully passed the CLEP examination one department would allow credits to be awarded thereby decreasing the number of courses and credit hours needed to meet specific degree requirements. Another department would not grant the college credit in their discipline, but would allow advanced placement of the student. The number of credits, or courses, required for graduation would not be decreased. The student would have to substitute other courses for those successfully challenged. A third department may refuse to consider either the awarding of credit or advanced placement within their discipline. The philosophy,

in this latter instance, was that the student would always benefit from taking the course.

Within this framework, in 1974, the department of nursing adopted a policy that would award credit for the first two semesters of the nursing program. The student was allowed to challenge up to twelve credits of the thirty-four required in nursing for the Associate in Science degree in nursing. Eight of the credits were earned through passing the CLEP fundamentals of nursing examination. The remaining four credits were earned through a nursing skills test administered by the department of nursing faculty.

Only specific students have been allowed to challenge the nursing program. Certain prerequisites had to be met by the student before the challenging examination would be accepted in lieu of course work. The challenging student must be either a licensed practical nurse with one year of employment since graduation, an ex-military corpsman, or a former nursing student in a registered nursing program (College Bulletin, 1977-78:17).

No other students were allowed to challenge regardless of their past experiences or educational qualifications. The department faculty felt that other student's deficiencies in nursing skills and/or knowledge would be too great. Therefore, it would be impossible for the student to overcome the handicap, or too much of the faculty's time would be taken up in eliminating the gaps in the student's knowledge.

The number of individuals who have taken the examinations has been unknown. Students have not been required to receive the department's permission, nor be admitted to the

college before taking the examination. The student may take the examination at any testing center in the United States. However, in the past year, since Castleton State College has become a testing center, eleven students have applied and taken the examination. Of these eleven, nine have successfully passed. Indicating that possibly eighty to ninety percent who take the examination earn a passing score. McCluskey (1974) cites that only the academically stronger student will choose to challenge a program, which was probably why some students have not desired to challenge feeling they would fail.

Since the policy was implemented in 1974, forty students have successfully challenged the program. Eighteen of the forty students have now graduated from the program. All eighteen have passed state board licensure examinations and are employed as Registered Nurses. Seven students are, at present, in the second year of the program and have received a grade of 'C' or better for the fall 1977 semester. These students plan to graduate in May 1978.

Ten students enter the second year of the program in the fall 1978 semester. Eight students who recently passed the challenging examination have been placed on a waiting list and will enter the program when a seat becomes available.

Much to the chagrin of some of the challenging students no grades have been awarded for the scores received on the examination. The credit has been identified on the student's transcript as credit by examination and has been considered as transfer credit. Therefore, these credits cannot be used to meet the thirty 'in-residence' credits each student must earn

on campus before being awarded a degree from Castleton State College (College Bulletin, 1977-78:13).

Review of the Literature

Challenging examinations were designed to aid students in meeting requirements for a degree without the frustration of having to repeat course content learned in other non traditional ways, or in non accredited post secondary institutions. Conley (1973) cites that challenging examinations were developed in response to the needs of able and ambitious individuals who desired to accomplish their goals in less time than traditional pathways of education allowed (145). Rouche, Herrscher, and Baker (1976) felt that challenging examinations met society's demands by allowing an individual to learn in other than traditional ways and then award the student college credit for what he had learned.

In the field of nursing there has been much discussion as to whether challenging examinations should be used. Of the 578 associate degree nursing programs listed by the National League for Nursing in 1975, 394 allowed students to challenge part of their nursing program. Of these programs cited eighty-four used national examinations, and 255 used teacher prepared examinations. Other programs listed did not specify the type of examination, or did not require or allow them.

The heavy emphasis on teacher prepared tests may have been because nursing faculty felt the nationally prepared examinations did not adequately test student knowledge in the nursing areas they deemed to be necessary for entrance into their program.

The use of teacher prepared tests by nursing schools may not be a sound practice unless the questions used in the challenging examinations had been previously validated. Dressel (1976) cites that nationally prepared tests would be more reliable in determining student knowledge than teacher made tests. He opines that the development of such examinations by teachers would not only be expensive and time consuming, but also might be of poor quality unless expert assistance was available (151).

All authors perused opined that challenging examinations should be used to assess prior learning and that college credit be awarded for successfully passing the examination. Laverdier (1977) cites that it has always been considered a very commendable practice in the academic world to award credits for such examinations (3). The National League for Nursing (1975), the national educational accrediting agency for nursing programs, has gone on record in favor of challenging examinations for students with prior learning in the field of nursing.

Bullough (1972) felt examinations should be allowed to eliminate the frustration of the practical nurse in having to repeat knowledge that has already been acquired. Newman (1971) went one step farther and felt that no one should be blocked in their upward mobility. That anyone should be allowed to take the examinations if he/she felt they had the knowledge. He felt that the nurses' aide should be allowed to continue to the practical nurse level than on to the registered nurse level without having to repeat, or retake, courses.

Challenging examinations have created some problems within educational institutions. Katzel (1970) stated that

not all challenging student may have received the same level of education. Even though the student successfully passed the examination, she felt students may be handicapped due to inadequate learning, or depth of knowledge, needed for their continued studies.

Desmarias and Foster (1975) cited that challenging examinations would test only one part of what a student has learned and, if many students challenge, there may be a tendency to lower general competency. There would be a trend toward an averaging of what was learned and true mastery of content would disappear.

Kimmel (1972) pointed out that the quality of education was frequently cited as a major concern, but felt that the quality of education could be retained. If the equality of educational recognition was to be accorded to the non traditional learner than it was important that standards of quality required of traditional learners be also required for the non traditional learner (65). Burnside (1969) agreed with Kimmel, but to ensure that quality was maintained she opined that before giving the student any credit for successfully passing a challenging examination he/she should meet certain criteria. The criteria she identified to be essential was that the student should be a licensed practical nurse from a state approved school, have a 'C' average in the college, and complete specific prerequisite courses. The criteria would seem to place road-blocks in the way of the student from non traditional backgrounds and may defeat the philosophy of opening up education to all without having to repeat what had been learned.

Bullough (1972) felt differently. She opined that credits from other post secondary schools should be awarded without challenge, that the challenging examinations should be used for knowledge learned in non traditional ways, e.g., on-the-job training, self-study, and not just for students who had met specific criteria.

The awarding of academic credit for challenging examinations seemed to be another area of concern for some institutions. Dressel (1976) cites the awarding of credit runs counter to many teachers' philosophies and they preferred advanced placement of the student without awarding college credits. However, most of the authors perused felt that credit should be given for prior learning, and the credits be used to meet degree requirements (Bullough, 1972; McClusky, 1974; Kimmel, 1972; Burnside, 1969).

The issue of awarding grades for the scores received by the student on the challenging examination was raised by some authors. Burnside (1969) and Kimmel (1972) opined that no grades should be given as grades were valueless. Most grades were given without any meaningful standard of measurement from one teacher to another. Thus, they were of little value in determining the knowledge of the student.

Students who challenge tend to do much better than the traditional student. In studying students who have successfully challenged Gillmore, Smock, Stallings, Heil (1974), and Grandy and Shea (1975) found that, even though no grades had been awarded for the tests, the challenging student graduated with a higher grade point average than the traditional learner.

Gillmore, Smock, Stalling, and Heil also noted that challenging students graduated with more total credit hours and with more upper division courses than other students (1).

The student who desired to challenge and enter a nursing program may find different problems than those faced by challenging students in other disciplines. Nursing education is 'lock-step'. The students enter at the same time and stay together, progressing at the same rate of speed through the curriculum until they are graduated as a group two years later. The challenging student would be entering a class that had been formed a year earlier. The difficulty with such a situation was that the knowledge base of students within the program would be approximately the same throughout the course of study. Raising the question of the challenging student and whether their knowledge base would be equal, or less than, that of the other nursing students.

In working with the challenging student there were indications that faculty have found gaps in student knowledge, which would create difficulties as the student continued their studies. Burnside (1975) cited that students entering the second year were lacking in such basic concepts as interpersonal relationships, anxiety, and the effects of stress. Ferguson (1976) found the challenging student had weaknesses in psychiatric concepts, communications, understanding the rationale for nursing care, and problem solving skills. She felt that faculty must make an extra effort in assisting students to make up these deficiencies, which could be a problem depending upon the faculty teaching load.

The student may also be aware of specific knowledge gaps and may find difficulty in learning more advanced nursing content. Abraham (1975) conducted a study to evaluate how the challenging student felt and did they feel they were handicapped in their knowledge? Some of the students questioned responded that the discipline needed to successfully complete lower level courses was lacking and they, therefore, had difficulty grasping some of the concepts in upper level courses (9). Thus, demonstrating that offering the nursing student the option of taking the challenging examinations has definite merit but specific weaknesses in knowledge content may be present and must somehow be eradicated by faculty, or the student would be handicapped in meeting their goal of upward mobility and registered nurse licensure.

Significance of the Study

The study was significant to the department of nursing because it assisted the faculty in identifying and focusing on problems within the policy and the realm of acquired knowledge of the challenging students. The study assisted the college in maintaining and, possibly, increasing the quality of one of its career programs by ensuring that the challenging student entered with the same standards and knowledge base as other nursing students. That the challenging student's knowledge base was not only adequate, but at a level that would not place the student, nursing faculty, or college at a disadvantage in aiding the student in achieving the needed skills and knowledge for graduation and registered nurse licensure.

The study may lead to a greater college wide study that would determine the strengthening, or changing, not only the department of nursing's policy, but also the college wide policy.

NATIONAL

ERASE CASE BOND

COTTON CLOTH

Chapter 3

PROCEDURE

In conducting the study of the policy of allowing the licensed practical nurse, ex-military corpsman, and ex-student from a registered nursing program to challenge the first year of the program two areas had to be identified. Those areas were: The population to be studied; and, the method to use in obtaining the necessary data.

Population to be studied

In determining how to conduct the study of the policy of allowing specific individuals to challenge the nursing program, the best source of information was considered to be individuals who had been involved in the situation. They would be the most knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses of the policy and would identify, and even suggest, possible solutions to existing problem areas.

The groups identified as being most reliable in obtaining the desired data included: 1) The individual who challenged the first year of the program. The groups included present students in the program and those who had graduated since the policy was implemented in 1974. 2) The individuals who were eligible to challenge the first year of nursing, but for various reasons, preferred to complete the entire nursing

program. 3) Nursing faculty who teach and interact with the challenging student. 4) The directors of nursing from the two other associate degree nursing programs in Vermont.

Determination of method

Once the groups were chosen, a method had to be identified that would obtain the needed data. Two methods were studied: The oral interview; and, the written questionnaire, to determine which would be most appropriate for the study.

The written questionnaire was chosen because it would be a more economical method in both time and money. The oral method would require contacting the individuals identified in the groups by telephone or personally. Many individuals, since graduation, have moved from the area and now live in distant parts of the United States, which would require considerable time, effort, and money in locating and interviewing them. Thus, the interview method was considered to be much too costly. Therefore, a written questionnaire format was determined to be the best method. It could be mailed to each individual, with a return stamped envelope, at a much lower cost. Addresses were easily obtained through the alumni office and the registrar of the college.

The written questionnaire would have the added advantage of allowing the respondent time to think about each question before answering, which would not be feasible with an interview.

The type of question to be asked was then determined. The open ended, unstructured question was chosen because it would be more flexible, giving the individual more freedom in

making their responses. The open ended question would exert less control over the individual answering and, therefore, would have a tendency to be less biasing than the more structured type. Also, the open ended, unstructured question, according to Abdellah and Ivine (1965), has a lower response error. If errors do occur they seem to be related to the faulty memory of the individual questioned and not to the actual response given.

Tuckman (1972) identified other factors that had to be determined in preparing the questions. He cited that the question must be valid and relevant to the subject being addressed; the question must be meaningful to the respondent; and, must elicit a consistent response from all individuals within the study.

The reliability of the question was important if the data were going to be of any value. Thus, each question must be tested before inclusion in the questionnaire. The best method to determine the validity was through a trial with a sample group, and questions meeting the criteria would be included in the questionnaire.

There were limitations identified in the use of questionnaires. Those limitations were: 1) All questions to be asked must be decided before the questionnaire was mailed. The possibility of following up any possible leads that would develop would, therefore, be impossible. 2) There was a limit to the kinds of questions that could be asked. 3) If too many questions were asked the respondent may refuse to answer the questionnaire. 4) The rate of return of questionnaires

was usually poor. 5) The respondent may try to please the questioner rather than answering truthfully. The individuals used in the study were known, which may have a biasing effect on the study. 6) Tuckman (1972) finds that people prefer to talk rather than to write. Therefore, in most instances, if feasible, an interview would have been the method of choice. 7) Interpretation of results from the unstructured, open ended format would be difficult. Tuckman identifies this as a major problem with this type of questionnaire.

Assumptions

The groups used were representative of the population. All students were eligible to challenge the first year of the nursing program, or were faculty involved with associate degree nursing programs where advanced placement has been used.

The smallness of the study would allow easy interpretation of results even though the questions were open ended and unstructured.

The questionnaire was a reliable instrument in eliciting the correct information. The reliability of the questions were tested to ensure that the questions would elicit the data that was desired. Each question was reviewed with two faculty members and two students to ensure that this would occur. Those questions that appeared most reliable were included in the questionnaire. A sample of the prepared questionnaire has been included in the appendix.

The study made no attempt to address, or question, challenging students in other disciplines within the college. Therefore, no assumptions can be made concerning students, or faculty, other than those in the nursing program at Castleton State College.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

Questionnaires were mailed to twenty-five students who had successfully challenged the first year of the nursing program. These students had graduated or were presently enrolled in the second year of the program. Nine, or thirty percent, of the questionnaires were returned.

Five questionnaires were mailed to students who, even though eligible, chose not to challenge the nursing program. Of the five distributed, two were returned, or forty percent.

Eight questionnaires were distributed to Castleton State College nursing faculty. Six completed questionnaires, or seventy-five percent, were returned.

Two questionnaires were mailed to the directors of the two other associate degree programs in the state of Vermont. Both of the completed questionnaires were returned.

In summary, forty questionnaires had been distributed and nineteen had been returned, which meant that forty-eight percent of the questionnaires were completed and returned.

Results of the returned questionnaires are summarized on the following pages. Included is a short discussion of the findings and examples of the comments made by the four groups.

Question 1. Do you feel that challenging examinations should be used for awarding credits in nursing? Why do you feel this way?

The responses to question 1 demonstrated that one hundred percent of the students from both groups felt that challenging examinations should be used to assess student prior learning. The Castleton State College nursing faculty were also of the opinion that challenging examinations should be used. The fourth group, the directors of the other Vermont associate degree nursing programs were divided in their answers. One director agreed that challenging examinations should be used. The other director felt they should not be used because students from practical nursing schools were not adequately prepared. Table 1, on page 21, summarizes the results.

Examples of comments from the four groups are as follows:

Challenging student:

- Prevent discouraging repetition of courses which may make the LPN think twice.
- LPN's have completed an intense twelve month academic clinical experience.
- Shows a respect of a person's education level, that has already been learned. Don't have to repeat courses that have been covered.
- As an LPN, with two years experience, I felt I could better spend my time on other subject areas and interests.



NATIONAL

ERASE EASE 2400

COTTON COUNTRY

Table 1

Do you feel that challenging examinations
should be used for awarding credits in
nursing? Why do you feel this way?

Respondents	Response	
	Yes	No
Challenging students	9	0
Non challenging students	2	0
Nursing faculty	6	0
Other directors	1	1

- I had worked in a hospital for three years and felt I knew the basic fundamentals of nursing well enough so that I shouldn't have to repeat it.
- I am a working mother of a four year old. The time was not available to take the first full year unless it was absolutely necessary.
- I evaluated my nursing procedures and decided I would not enjoy learning the basic nursing skills now, they are routine procedures from my varied experiences.
- Being an LPN and had worked for two and one half years I felt qualified to take it and earn credits toward my R.N.

Non challenging student responses:

- Yes, challenging examinations should be used if you have the clinical and academic experience, which I didn't.
- Yes, they should be but I felt I needed the instruction because I don't have a lot of hospital experience except in nursing homes.

Castleton State College nursing faculty responses:

- Yes, Fundamentals in first semester only. I feel we offer much theory in second semester that LPN doesn't have.
- I would prefer that a student who successfully challenges a portion of the program be exempt from that portion of our requirements without being awarded eight credits.

- Yes, with qualifications. In my opinion no more than five students should be permitted to enter the generic A.D. nursing program - given our present set of circumstances i.e., acceptance of sixty students into each class. The challenging student who is an LPN, ex medical corpsman or former nursing student in an R.N. program brings special needs relating to his/her strengths and weaknesses in previous preparation. These needs can be addressed on a one to one basis when only a small number are incorporated into the A.D. curriculum.

Other directors of Vermont associate degree nursing programs:

- No, because student's preparation is not adequate.
- Yes, so students will not have to repeat course work.

Question 2. Do you feel a national examination such as the College Level Examination Program (CLEP), adequately tests the student's knowledge or would a teacher made test be a better indicator?

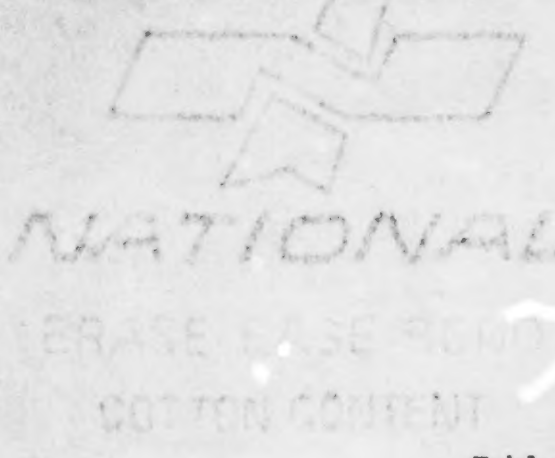
The responses to question two demonstrates that more challenging students felt that national testing was a better indicator of student knowledge than did the Castleton State College nursing faculty or the other directors. Of the challenging students seventy-two percent preferred the national test and twenty-nine percent the teacher made test. The nursing faculty were divided in their responses. Sixty-seven percent preferred teacher made tests and thirty-four percent preferred the national examination. The other two directors from the other Vermont nursing schools felt that teacher made

tests were the method of choice in determining the student's prior knowledge. Table 2, on page 25, summarizes the results.

Examples of responses from the four groups are as follows:

Challenging students:

- I felt it covered nursing very well, I felt a little unprepared for the maternity test. However, that was my own fault.
- Yes, knowledge, but not skills. Review of the student's past work experience might be helpful in this area.
- I feel a national test system, such as CLEP, has a better scope of the nationally accepted nursing concepts. Teachers here would stress their approach to nursing.
- A teacher made test might touch upon the important things in more detail. They would be more aware of the students present knowledge and gear the test questions in that direction.
- The examination I took covered a variety of required skills and knowledge. I had anticipated a more difficult examination.
- The essential facts were covered in the exam. I do not feel a teacher would realize the potential of an LPN if she were teaching R.N. students.
- No, the test in maternity was extremely difficult, geared to a graduate nurse and the fundamental exams were old, outdated information and did not cover all areas.



NATIONAL

ERASE CASE 9000

COTTON CONTENT

Table 2

Do you feel a national examination such as the
College Level Examination Program (CLEP)
adequately tests the student's knowledge
or would a teacher made test be a
better indicator?

Respondents	Response	
	Teacher Tests	National Tests
Challenging students	2	7
Non challenging students	1	1
Nursing faculty	4	2
Other directors	2	0

The non challenging student's responses:

- The teacher made test, because the teachers know what their students have met as requirements and they would best know what level to test the challenging student at.
- The national examination. Teacher made would probably be too specific.

Castleton State College nursing faculty responses:

- CLEP exam questions are representative - but could be longer. Teacher made, maybe - validity should be proved first.
- CLEP should not be used. I believe the test to be incomplete and not up to date. Teacher made would give us a better guarantee that the product of our program would more likely reflect the high standards of the department.
- It is hard for me to justify six credits for the CLEP exam we reviewed. Teacher made: Probably - but not until we can judge the validity and/or reliability of our tests for covering fundamentals content (other than that taught by us).
- CLEP exam is too general - too brief - doesn't concentrate on the same areas as we stress. A teacher made test would be a better indicator of success in our program. However, I would be more comfortable with a standardized test (national).
- CLEP exam: No! Perhaps it tests the knowledge she

has but not the knowledge we'd like her to have!

Very elementary. Prefer teacher made tests. Much more comprehensive. We would be assured that the student had the same theory as our students.

- I can only comment upon mental-health content. I do not feel that passing the particular examination that was reviewed is an accurate indices of the candidates knowledge of mental health concepts. Questions relating directly to psycho-social content (approximately 6/75 questions!) were superficial in nature. The student entering the second year should have basic awarenesses of such theories of stress - crisis - grief - behaviour - developmental tasks - Freudian framework (4 areas) elements of C.M.H. theory and practice - commonly occurring syndromes in psychiatric nursing, concepts of mental health and mental illness - basic psycotropic drugs (anti-anxiety agents - and so forth). None of this specific content was covered in the examination presented to faculty. Hopefully more recent exams do cover this material or at least some of it!!
- In my opinion for a student to be granted entrance into the second year on the basis of the examination we question is an alarming practice.

Directors of the other associate degree nursing programs:

- The CLEP exam does not adequately cover what is being taught. Teacher made tests are used by our institution and we are very satisfied with them. The test

used is the same final examination given to students at the end of the semester.

- We do not accept CLEP exams. The challenging student is allowed to take a teacher made test and is then exempt from that portion of the course if she passes.

Question 3. Eight credits are awarded for successfully challenging the fundamentals of nursing examination. Is this too many, too few, or a satisfactory number?

The responses to question three demonstrated that the majority of the respondents, or seventy percent, felt that the number of credits awarded the student for the challenging examination was satisfactory. No faculty felt that too few credits were given for the successful candidate, but two challenging students were of the opinion that more should be given. They felt that the number of credits indicated on the results of the examination from the testing company should be the number awarded. One of the respondents was undecided as to what number should be given and felt it should be based upon how much the student knows. Table 3, on page 29, summarizes the responses from this question.

Examples of responses to question three are as follows:
Challenging students:

- Yes for what I was after.
- It was a fair amount of credits.
- I think the eight credits I recieved was fair but considering the one year of LPN school and two years experience, maybe I should have challenged more.

NATIONAL

CHALLENGE-BOND

COTTON CONTENT

Table 3

Eight credits are awarded for successfully challenging the fundamentals of nursing examination. Is this too many, too few, or a satisfactory number?

Respondents	Too Many	Too Few	Satisfactory	Undecided
Challenging students	0	2	7	0
Non challenging students	0	0	1	1
Nursing faculty	2	0	4	0
Other directors	1	0	1	0

- I was satisfied with the number of credits given.
- I feel if the state awards ten credits for the CLEP exam, CSC ought to accept all ten credits.
- I was disappointed when the college only accepted part of the credits. I felt I earned the ten credits given by the state and deserved them.

The non challenging student's responses:

- As much as is given for the course of study.
- It depends on how much they know.

Castleton State College nursing faculty responses:

- Six credits should be the maximum that a challenging student can earn.
- Six credits - or the first semester.
- I would prefer less credits for challenging and make up the deficit by other undergraduate nursing courses which might be of value to them later if they continue on toward a B.S. degree.
- Six credits if including O.B. Whatever credit is decided it should be the same for each student.

Responses from the directors of other Vermont associate degree programs:

- No credits should be awarded. The student should just be exempt from portions of the course.
- Six for each semester as transfer credit.

Question 4. Many students feel a letter grade should be given for successfully passing the challenging examination. What do you feel should be the policy?

Responses to question 4 showed that the challenging students are divided in their responses as to whether a letter grade should be given when the test is successfully passed. Thirty-three percent of the challenging students felt that a grade should be awarded, forty-four percent were of the opinion that no grade should be awarded. Twenty-two percent were undecided as to whether a grade should be given. The challenging students were the only group of respondents who felt that grades should be awarded. The other three groups were unanimous in their opinion that no grade should be awarded and the credits should be considered as transfer credits. Table 4, on page 32, summarizes the responses to question four.

Examples of responses from the four groups are as follows:

Challenging students:

- A grade doesn't matter.
- ? should grades be attached to your state boards for LPNs - 350?
- No not unless all transfer credits were given letter grades.
- I would prefer a letter grade because it was difficult to tell exactly what my score was. I only knew where I stood on a scale in relation to others who took the same test.
- Yes, the CLEP exams scores are numerical and also coincide with a lettering system. For example, I recieved a B on the CLEP exam and feel I should get a B for the first semester of nursing.

NATIONAL

ERASE CASE BOND

COTTON CONTENT

Table 4

Many students feel a letter grade should be given
for successfully passing the challenging
examination. What do you feel
should be the policy?

Respondents	Yes	No	Undecided
Challenging students	3	4	2
Non challenging students	0	2	0
Nursing faculty	0	6	0
Other directors	0	2	0

Responses from the non challenging students:

- No, I don't feel it would be necessary.
- No, it should be as transfer credit.

Castleton State College Nursing faculty responses:

- No - pass/fail only. Almost impossible to give a letter grade.
- No letter grade - pass/fail only.
- I see of no objective way of rewarding a letter grade for a challenging exam. taken off campus. There are too many uncontrolled variables.
- No - pass/no pass.

Other directors of associate degree programs:

- No, should be same as transfer credit.
- No - would be impossible to objectively award one.

Question 5. There has been some indication that challenging students are handicapped in their knowledge base when entering the second year of the program. What do you feel about this?

Responses to question five indicated that the challenging students were divided in their answer as to whether they were handicapped in their knowledge when entering the nursing program with advanced standing. Fifty-five percent indicated that they were handicapped, and forty-four percent stated that they did not feel handicapped. One hundred percent of the non challenging students felt they would have been handicapped if they had entered with advanced standing. The Castleton State College nursing faculty felt the students were handicapped in

some areas. Sixty-six percent of the faculty stated that the challenging student was definately handicapped. Sixteen percent were uncertain whether they were or were not handicapped. The directors from the other two Vermont associate degree nursing programs stated that the students who were successful in challenging their programs were not handicapped in their knowledge base. The responses from the four groups have been summarized in Table 5, on page 35.

Examples of responses from the four groups are as follows:

The challenging students:

- I felt I knew more in some areas (experiences in clinical) and less in some theory.
- Our program of practical nurse training lacked psychology and this maybe something we would miss in the first semester.
- I felt I knew as much as they did except for the psych. knowledge they already had. I had no previous training in this area.
- Organization. I feel if you took one area of nursing you could get the basics down - than move on to other areas.
- No, mostly because of my variable nursing experiences for the past ten years.
- At least as much, but maybe presented in a different format.
- The only handicap I felt was that I didn't know what

NATIONAL

ERASE BASE BUND

COTTON CONTENT

Table 5

There has been some indication that challenging students are handicapped in their knowledge base when entering the second year of the program. What do you feel about this?

Respondents	Yes	No	Uncertain
Challenging students	5	4	0
Non challenging students	2	0	0
Nursing faculty	4	1	1
Other directors	0	2	0

was expected by me from the teachers. That's because I wasn't in the nursing course the first year. I had to ask a lot of questions.

The non challenging student's responses:

- This would depend on the students actual experience with nursing. I would have been.
- They might be - it would be individual. I know I would be.

Castleton State College Nursing faculty responses:

- Yes, especially in psych. nursing.
- Existing students seem to lack psychology theory - theory for our procedures (skills) and lack some medication skills.
- Yes in some areas especially stress, inflammation, mental health.
- Again, only in respect to mental health/psychiatric content, it is my experience over the past years that challenging students do most definitely present a lack in this area. With a number of five or less, the particular instructor can help these students individually. If the number of students in this category increases, it would be unrealistic to expect the instructor involved to set up tutorials as needed for this group of students so that they will be fully equipped to sit for state board exams.
- No - not one has failed any test nor proven unsafe. Only two have even gotten as low as a 'C'. Most grades are 'A' or 'B'.

- As yet, I have not had an honest opportunity to evaluate this.

The responses from the directors of the other two associate degree nursing programs in Vermont:

- No, students attend the same orientation as other students.
- No, they do well in the exempted portions of the course.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The questionnaires were distributed to four groups of individuals involved with challenging examinations in nursing. The groups were: The student who had successfully challenged; the student who, though eligible, chose not to challenge; nursing faculty from Castleton State College; and, the directors of the other two Vermont associate degree nursing programs.

The questionnaire was designed to seek answers to questions that had been raised about the current challenging policy in the nursing department and whether changes were necessary within that policy.

Responses to the five questions correspond very closely with current literature pertaining to the use of challenging examinations in colleges, and particularly in nursing.

The responses to question one demonstrated that all four groups considered a challenging policy valid. The policy was one that should be continued to not only prevent repetition of course content, but to also save the student time and money.

The second question attempted to identify which method of testing would better sample student knowledge. The question brought a mixed response. The majority of the challenging students felt national examinations were satisfactory in

testing their knowledge. Only one complaint was identified which was that the test taken seemed to be outdated.

Faculty, however, felt that the national examination was inadequate and should be replaced with a teacher prepared examination. They felt the teacher prepared examination would test knowledge that the challenging student should have before being given advanced placement within the Castleton State College nursing program. Two faculty were concerned with the validity and reliability of a teacher prepared examination and, therefore, opined that teacher prepared examinations may be unfair to the challenging student. One director of the other Vermont schools with an associate degree nursing program has used the final examination as their challenging examination. She expressed complete satisfaction with the results and with the students who had successfully passed the examination.

The use of teacher prepared examinations seems to be the trend in nursing programs with the majority of the programs preferring them. Perhaps the content covered in the national examinations has not been as comprehensive as nursing instructors would prefer, or the national examination does not test all areas desired. The one deficient area identified was the almost complete lack of psychiatric concepts in the national examinations.

Question three referred to the credits awarded the challenging student when successfully passing the examination. Faculty and students responses were divided. Some faculty

felt that too many credits were awarded. That only one semester, or six credits, should be given for the national examination. Students and other faculty, however, were satisfied with the number of credits awarded. Two students felt that the college should award them the number the "state" had given them. The students were apparently unaware of where the credits, or test, came from. That the state of Vermont was not involved in any way with the awarding of credits for challenging examinations.

The question about letter grades being given was considered by the majority of respondents that none should be identified. They felt there was no objective way to award them and that grades were meaningless in identifying what the student knew. However, two students were of the opinion that grades should be awarded. They felt that it was a way of knowing how well they did on the test and that a letter grade was included on the CLEP results and should be recorded on their transcript.

Question five requested information on whether the student was handicapped in their lack of knowledge when entering a program with advanced standing. Approximately one half of the challenging students did feel handicapped, as well as both of the non challenging students feeling they would have been if they had challenged. The majority of the nursing faculty from Castleton State College definitely felt students were handicapped particularly in the following areas: Psychiatric nursing; theory behind procedures and skills; medications; stress; inflammation; and, fluid and electrolytes. These

concepts are included in the Castleton State College nursing program during the second semester and may be why the majority of the faculty felt that only the first semester should be challenged. One faculty member expressed a willingness to assist the student with their knowledge deficiencies. However, she would be willing to do this only if no more than five challenging students were admitted at a time to the program. She opined that more than five would make it too difficult to work with them on a one-to-one basis.

Since the students did not seem as aware of their deficiencies in knowledge content as faculty were, perhaps the faculty had unknowingly been lowering the quality of the program to aid these students. This fact was identified by several authors in the current literature and must be something that must not be allowed to happen.

The two directors from the other Vermont schools felt that their challenging students were not handicapped. However, neither school uses CLEP examinations, which may indicate that perhaps the teacher prepared examination would be a better indicator of student knowledge in nursing. This may be particularly true with the student who enters a program that is 'lock-step' such as nursing.

In summary the policy of allowing students to challenge part of the nursing program was identified as an acceptable practice. However, the amount of credit to be awarded, the type of examination that should be used to assess student knowledge, and the students being handicapped in their basic

knowledge were areas that needed to be addressed if the challenging policy was to be a sound one.

The following changes in the policy are recommended for the student who desires to challenge the first year of the Castleton State College associate degree nursing program.

1. Continue to use challenging examinations for college credit.
2. The College Level Examination Program (CLEP) be used for awarding credits, but for the first semester only. The passing score will be determined through a norming process by other students who have completed the first semester of nursing.
3. The better prepared student will be allowed to challenge the second semester. If the challenging student successfully passes the CLEP examination with at least ten points above the passing score, then that student will be allowed to challenge the second semester. Thus, allowing the students who are better prepared, and demonstrates this preparation by passing well above the passing score, that student will be able to save both time and money.
4. The second semester challenging examination will be a teacher prepared test. Questions will be identified from previously given examinations that have been proven to be valid and reliable in testing nursing content in the second semester. The examination will include those areas identified by the faculty in the questionnaires, i.e., psychiatric concepts, stress, inflammation, fluid and electrolytes, and theory behind procedures and skills. The examination will be passed by at least seventy-five percent correct for the

challenging student to earn credit and further advanced placement. No grade will be given, and credits will be identified as credit by examination and considered as transfer credit.

The policy will be submitted to the nursing faculty, the college faculty, and administration. If the proposed policy is approved, than implementation will be as follows:

1. Students who have challenged under the quidelines of the present policy will continue to be accepted into the program until the present waiting list is exhausted. However, these students will be advised that deficiencies do exist in their knowledge and study within the identified areas is highly encouraged.

2. At the end of the fall semester, 1978, the freshman students will take the CLEP examination for the purpose of establishing a passing norm to be used for subsequent challenging students.

3. Any student desiring to take the examination after the beginning of the 1978-79 academic year will do so under the new policy quidelines. All CLEP scores received during the fall semester will be held until the norming process is completed.

4. A follow up study will be planned and conducted after the policy changes have been completely implemented. The study will determine whether the changes within the policy were favorable or further revisions are needed to meet the needs of the challenging student.

The prepared policy, with the study leading to the policy, will be shared with other faculty members in the college to assist in possibly clarifying the college-wide policy.

NATIONAL
ERASE BASE
REFERENCES CITED

- Abdellah, Faye and Eugene Levine.
1965 Better Patient Care Through Nursing Research.
New York: Macmillan Company.
- Abraham, A. A.
1975 "How Have They Gotten Along." U.S., Educational
Resources Information Center, ERIC Document
ED 123 966, November, 1975.
- Bullough, Bonnie.
1972 "You Can't Get There From Here: Articulation in
Nursing Education." The Journal of Nursing
Education. (November):4-9.
- Burnside, Helen.
1969 "Practical Nurses Become Associate Degree
Graduates." Nursing Outlook. (April):Reprint.
- Conley, Virginia.
1973 Curriculum and Instruction in Nursing. Boston:
Little, Brown and Company.
- College Level Examination Program.
1975 CLEP Scores: Interpretation and Use.
- Desmarias, Armand and Foster Wiggins.
1975 "Credit for Learning - A Proposed Alternative
Approach to the Policy of Granting College
Credit at Bristol Community College." U.S.,
Educational Resources Information Center, ERIC
Document ED 122 881, May, 1975.
- Dressel, Paul.
1976 Handbook of Academic Evaluation. San Francisco:
Jossey-Bass.
- Ferguson, Norma.
1976 "Assessing the Needs of the LPN Entering Associate
Degree Nursing." Coping with Change Through
Assessment and Evaluation. New York: National
League for Nursing.
- Gillmore, Gerald M., Richard Smock, William Stallings and Donald
Heil.
1974 "Student Educational Benefits from Proficiency
Testing: An Empirical Study." U.S., Educational
Resources Information Center, ERIC Document ED
103 463.

Grandy, Jerilee and Walter Shea.

1975 "The CLEP General Examination in American Colleges and Universities." U.S., Educational Resources Information Center, ERIC Document ED 129 852, December.

Katzell, Mildred E.

1970 "Upward Mobility in Nursing." Nursing Outlook. (September):36-39.

Kimmel, Ernest W.

1972 "Problems of Recognition." Explorations in Non Traditional Study. San Francisco:Jossey-Bass.

Laverdier, Rita.

1977 "The crediting of Prior Learning." Journal of Nursing Education. (January):3-5.

McCluskey, Jimmy.

1974 "Summary Report on Arkansas State University's Participation in the College Level Examination Program (CLEP)." U.S., Educational Resources Information Center, ERIC Document ED 108 550.

National League for Nursing.

1975 Directory of Career Mobility Programs in Nursing Education. New York: National League for Nursing.

Newman, Frank.

1971 Report on Higher Education. U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Washington: Government Printing Office.

Palmer, Patricia and Sandra Brown.

1974 "Associate Degree Challenge Examinations: Two Approaches." Nursing Outlook. (September):583-585.

Rouche, John E., Barton Herrscher, and George Baker.

1976 "Time as the Variable, Achievement as the Constant: Competency-based Instruction in the Community College." U.S., Educational Resources Information Center, ERIC Document ED 122 872.

Tuckman, Bruce.

1972 Conducting Educational Research. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.

NATIONAL

ERASEABLE BOND

COTTON CONTENT

APPENDIX

47

53

NATIONAL

48

CRASE BASE BOND

COTTON CONTENT

To: _____
From: Shirley Belock, Chairman Department of Nursing
Date: November 30, 1977
Subject: The policy of challenging examinations for
advanced placement in the associate degree
nursing program.

As chairman of the Department of Nursing and a student
in the ED. D. Program at Nova University, Fort Lauderdale,
Florida, I would appreciate your help in a study I am
conducting.

The study concerns the policy of challenging the first
year of the program. To do this study I need certain
information from students and faculty who are involved
with the policy.

I would appreciate it if you would take a few minutes
of your time and answer the five questions on the
following page. Please return the completed questionnaire
in the self-addressed stamped envelope that has been
included for your convenience. I would appreciate
your response no later than December 20, 1977.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Attachment: Questionnaire.

This questionnaire is designed to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the policy of awarding college credits to students that are eligible to challenge fundamentals of nursing through the College Level Examination Program (CLEP). Thank you for your cooperation in answering the following questions.

1. Do you feel that challenging examinations should be used for awarding credits in nursing? Why do you feel this way?

2. Do you feel a national examination such as the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) adequately tests the students' knowledge or would a teacher made test be a better indicator?

3. Eight credits are awarded for successfully challenging the fundamentals of nursing examination. Is this too many, too few, or a satisfactory number?

4. Many students feel a letter grade should be given for successfully passing the challenging examination. What do you feel should be the policy?

5. There has been some indication that challenging students are handicapped in their knowledge base when entering the second year of the program. What do you feel about this?

UNIVERSITY OF CALIF.
LOS ANGELES

MAY 26 1978

CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGES